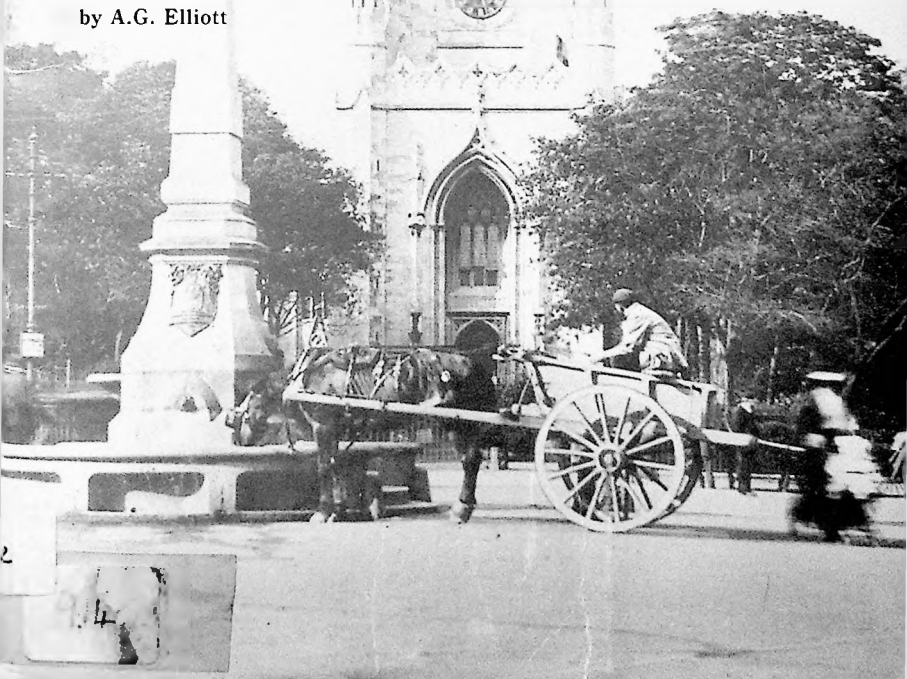


A PORTRAIT OF BRIGHTON IN TRAM DAYS

by A.G. Elliott



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A PORTRAIT OF BRIGHTON IN TRAM DAYS

By A.G. Elliott



Acknowledgements and Author's Remarks

The early photos in this book were selected from the excellent collection of Robert Jeeves, The Postcard Saloon, 36 Queens Road, Brighton. I am pleased to thank him for permitting me to reproduce them. I also acknowledge that I ascertained certain information from a Review published in 1904 on the fiftieth anniversary of Brighton's Incorporation as a Borough.

The 38 years of the Brighton Tram Era can only be sampled in a book of 32 pages but I trust the reader will feel a touch of nostalgia and 'hear' the clatter and clank of the trams when viewing the numerous street scenes. On this occasion I have included only two 'today' pictures in order that the maximum number of tram pictures can be shown. The trams left the streets on 1st September, 1939 and war started two days later. Things have never been quite the same since! The captions, as always, could be longer but, regrettably, space does not permit. The Tram Shelter in Dyke Road, (see page 29), was scheduled, in 1986, to join its colleague at the Chalk Pits Museum.

Alf Elliott

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Brighton in Tram Days – Some Historical Notes.

The Brighton Tram Days, (1901-1939), covered nearly four decades, three coronations, an abdication, a General Strike (1926) and the carnage of the Great War, (1914-1918). During their 38 years of service the development of the petrol driven car was rapid as was the progress of the omnibus. By 1939 the once ubiquitous horse was rapidly departing from the street scene but the Brighton Trams had changed little in their lifetime, some protection from the elements for the driver but nothing for those who chose to ride on top! The layout remained the same and the routes extended no further, and access to the tramcars in the middle of the roads became more hazardous. Nevertheless, some 47 years after their demise the magic of the electric trams remains as do four tram shelters and in Dyke Road a pole, for supporting wires and which was retained for floodlights, opposite the Dyke Road Hotel!

It was not until 1882 that the Hammond Electric Company placed an electricity supply on a commercial basis in Brighton, a pioneering step, when a small generating station commenced operating in Gloucester Road. Progress was such that Brighton Corporation entered the field in 1890 resulting in the building of a larger generating station in North Road that was formally opened on 14th September, 1891. By the end of the 19th century it became clear that the station in North Road could not expand further to meet the rapidly increasing demand for electricity. The Engineer and Manager, Arthur Wright, proposed that land should be purchased on the southern side of the lock basin at Southwick, where seaborne coal could be delivered direct. Subsequently a superb Power Station was erected there which was officially opened on 16th June, 1906. Thus, during Tram days, and beyond, electricity was supplied to the Brighton area by a Corporation owned Electricity Undertaking.

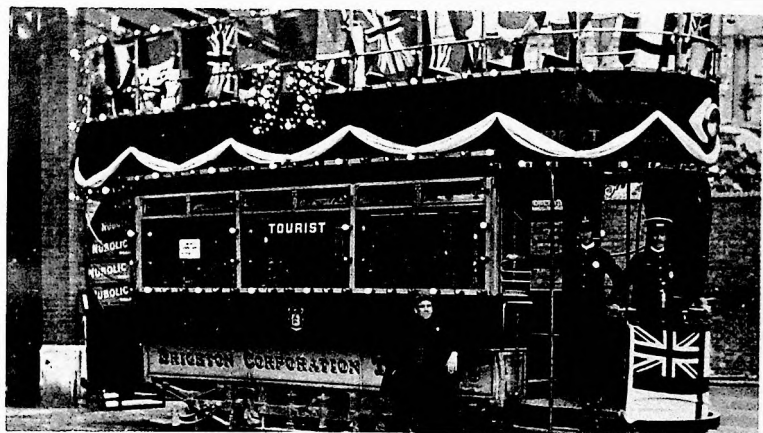
It was against this background that the Brighton Corporation Tramways were born. As is so often the case with things today, the Trams only arrived on the Brighton streets after years of discussion, debate and disagreement. As early as 1864 there was an abortive proposal for a tramway along the seafront from Shoreham Harbour to Kemp Town. In 1879 it was proposed to run trams along Western Road, also the Preston Road from Old Steine and along Lewes Road and up Elm Grove. This scheme also came to nought.

In 1883 the proposals were revived in a modified form and a horse tramway was constructed from Shoreham to the limits of Aldrington at the borders of Hove. (Horse power was envisaged for tramway schemes at that time with the possible use of steam power). However, a proposal to extend the line through Hove and along to the Dyke Road end of Upper North Street and thence to Brighton Station by way of North Gardens and Surrey Street, never left the drawing board. Another company sought powers to run trams from the Pavilion to Preston with a possible extension to Patcham, also along the Lewes Road and up North Road to connect with the other, (unbuilt), line at North Gardens. It is recorded that there was riotous opposition to these proposals! About this time the Corporation instructed a Committee to prepare a plan for electric or horse trams to run to Preston, Lewes Road and up Elm Grove. This also came to nothing. Things remained in abeyance for some thirteen years, then the British Electric Traction Company produced some somewhat similar proposals. This scheme was also rejected by the Corporation. However, in 1899, with the progress of electric generation, as briefly referred to in the second paragraph, the Brighton Corporation adopted a comprehensive scheme for electric trams of its own. This included proposals for lines down Montpelier Road and from the top of North Street over Dyke Road. These sections were opposed and deleted. Parliament passed the amended scheme and construction went ahead. The Lewes Road line was opened on 25th November, 1901, The Mayor, Alderman Stafford, driving the first car. In a few weeks lines were open up New England Road, Beaconsfield Road, Ditchling Road, also Elm Grove and down Queens Park Road to Upper Rock Gardens. The Pavilion, (the bottom of Church Street), was then the terminus. During 1903 and 1904 extensions were made to Old Steine, along London Road, to the station via North Road and Queens Road, and from the Seven Dials, (top of New England Road), to Tivoli Crescent. The final track mileage was some 9½ miles. Other extensions and proposals never materialised. It is recorded that in the year to March, 1904, the trams carried nearly 11 million passengers. The opposition to the Montpelier Road and Dyke Road, (south of the Seven Dials), proposals was undoubtedly related to the class of property in those roads and their occupants.

In 1986 some of the North Road buildings still remain but Southwick Power Station, (Brighton A), has gone from the scene as have the trams.

Index

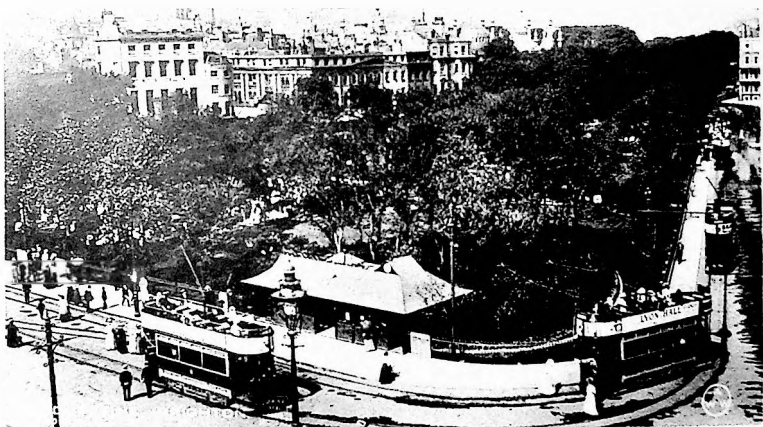
Page No.	Title
5	Brighton Corporation Tramcars
6	Old Steine Terminus
7	Old Steine
8	Kings Road
9	Kings Road
10	Church Street Terminus AND Grand Parade
11	Gloucester Place AND St. Georges Place
12	Queens Road
13	Queens Road AND West Hill Road
14	View from St.Peter's Tower AND York Place
15	London Road
16	London Road
17	London Road AND New England Road
18	Preston Circus
19	Preston Circus AND Beaconsfield Road
20	Stanford Avenue AND Seven Dials
21	Seven Dials AND Dyke Road
22	Beaconsfield Villas AND Preston Drove
23	Preston Drove AND Ditchling Road
24	Richmond Place AND Waterloo Place
25	Lewes Road
26	Queens Park Road
27	Egremont Place AND Rock Gardens
28	Tram Shelters, Preston Drove and Ditchling Road
29	Tram Shelter, Richmond Place
30	Western Road
31	Western Road
32	Church Street - Election Results 1931



The Brighton Tram Era, 1901-1939.

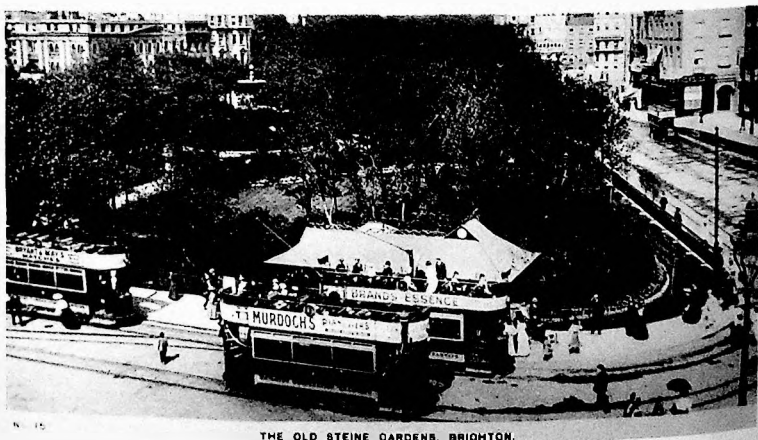
It is appropriate that this book should commence with two early photos of Brighton Tramcars. Tourist cars toured the whole of the system for 1/- (5p). In 1911 a car was decorated for the Coronation of King George V. Below is a car on service in Dyke Road, (Route 'N' for New England Road). All the trams pictured in this book have open cabs but by 1939 many cabs had glass protective screens, although the basic Brighton tram remained unchanged in appearance.



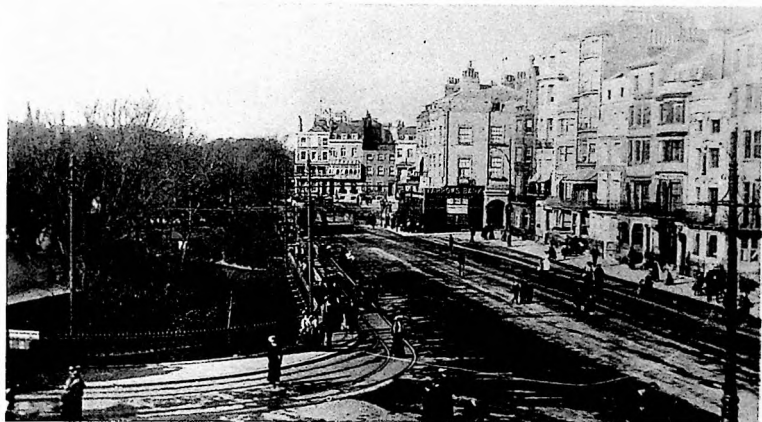


The Old Steine Terminus. C. 1915 and C. 1912 (below).

From November, 1903 the Old Steine, or Aquarium, as shown on the destination blinds, became the central terminus for all tram routes. From the beginning the trams went to the right of the Victoria and Old Steine Gardens, outward and inward. Circa 1929 one way traffic was instituted round the gardens and line adjustments were made at the Fountain in order that trams could conform with the traffic flow, which was now to the left of the gardens.



THE OLD STEINE GARDENS, BRIGHTON.



**The Old Steine, eastern side, (view north) C. 1910.
St. James's Street, viewed from Old Steine, (view east) C. 1911 (below)**

Before the erection of traffic islands and the present day volume of traffic the pedestrian was happy to walk anywhere! (lower) The roadway dissecting the Old Steine was created in 1824. On the lawn to the left of the road is a statue of George IV, erected in 1828. In 1922, after the Great War, (1914-1918), the statue was moved to the foot of Church Street. The Brighton War Memorial was erected on the vacated site. This was unveiled by Earl Beatty on 7th October, 1922.



Kings Road, the foot of West Street, (view west) C. 1905 (this page).

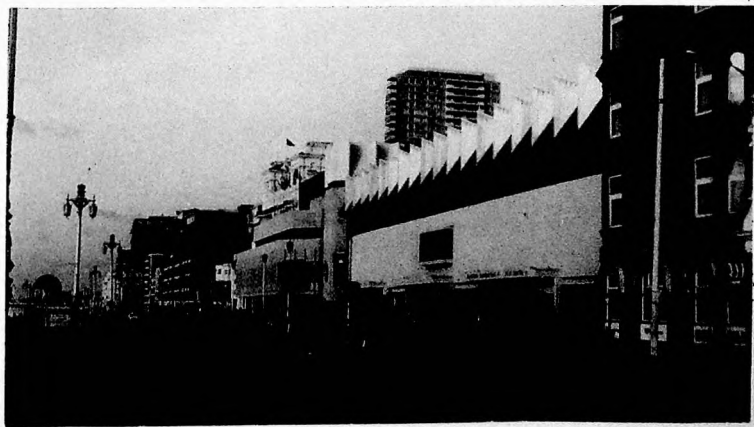
Kings Road is pictured, (on this and page 9), in early, late and post tram days. Electric trams reached the sea at the Old Steine, or the Aquarium, as indicated on the destination blinds. They never set a wheel in Kings Road but passengers could soon walk by the 'breezy briny', if they so desired. The pictures, showing broadly the same view, provide interesting contrasts. In the 'thirties' the change of holiday habits was in the distant future and Brighton could still expect the long stay visitor. As to whether the view is enhanced in the 1980's can be left to the reader. Note the horse transport and the protective railings in 1905, observe the 'Streamline' taxis in 1937, also the bus with the open stairway to the upper deck, some still remained in the 'thirties'. Traffic lights had reached the busy West Street junction and a number of important intersections by 1937. At West Street they replaced the police controlled semaphore 'stop go' system which had been exclusive to Brighton. This is illustrated in a photo of Preston Circus on page 18.





Kings Road, C. 1937 and 1983 (below).

Compared with 1905 the view in 1937 shows little major change. The changes came in the 1970's and the late 1960's with the development of the Kingswest Complex and the Brighton Centre. The Ice Cream Parlour, various shops and the Palladium Cinema, (formerly the Alhambra Theatre), are but fading memories. The Hotel Metropole also shows changes but the Grand Hotel was undisturbed in 1983.





Church Street Terminus (Victoria Gardens). C. 1903.
Grand Parade, (view north) C. 1908 (below)

For the first two years all tram routes terminated at Church Street. From November 1903, with the extension of the lines to Old Steine, the terminus was moved to that location. The view of Grand Parade, (below), is just to the right of the Church Street terminus. The tram lines were laid adjacent to the gardens and when the one way system was introduced, on the left of the gardens, passengers were permitted to alight at the drivers end of the tram.





Gloucester Place, (view north) C. 1927.
St. Georges Place, (view north) C. 1907 (below)

Two views on the west side of Victoria Gardens. The track, and a tram, adjacent to the gardens, can be observed. The Parish Church of St. Peter is also well viewed. As Brighton became more and more popular further accommodation was required for those who wished to attend divine service and St. Peter's Church was built 1824-28. The architect was Sir Charles Barry. The chancel by Somers Clarke was added in 1896-1902.





Queens Road, from top of North Road, (view north) C. 1904.
Queens Road, (view north) C. 1906 (below)

The lines from the Aquarium came up North Road and continued to the Station Gates. At No.36/37 Queens Road was the Waverley Temperance Hotel. At No.36, now, is Branch 2, The Postcard Saloon, where mounted enlargements can be obtained of all the early photos in this book. Parts of Queens Road have experienced some rebuilding but in the lower view the large Victorian building, erected 1879, (first right), and formerly used by a Wholesale Provision Merchant, (Nos.86/87), still stands.

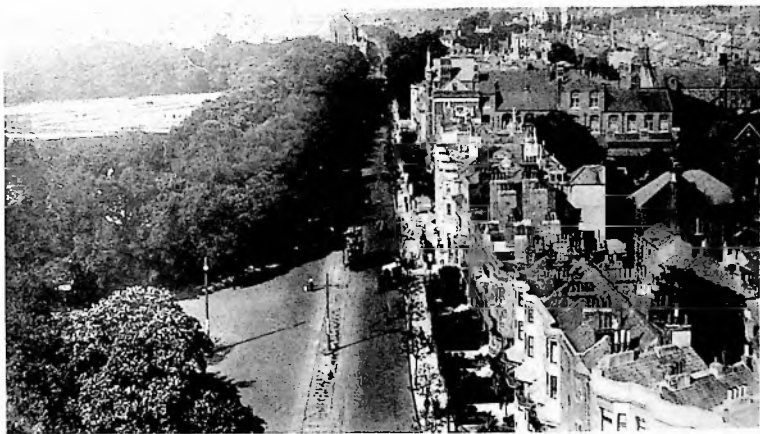




Queens Road, Brighton Station Entrance. C. 1912.
West Hill Road, (view west) C. 1907 (below)

A tram, Route 'S' for Station, waits before its journey to the Aquarium. The Terminus Hotel blocked any access to Surrey Street. Junction Road, at today's width, was created in two stages, in the mid-'twenties' and the mid-'thirties'. West Hill Road, (below), runs west into Dyke Road. The 130 foot clock tower of the Dials Congregational Church, built in 1870, was a landmark for miles around. It stood south of the Clifton Road junction with Dyke Road until 1972.





The view to the north from St. Peter's Tower. C. 1921.
York Place, (view north) C. 1907 (below)

An excellent view along Richmond Terrace, towards Lewes Road. On the left is the Level, the oldest public open space in Brighton. It was enclosed circa 1819 and circled with many trees about 1845. The large church of St. Martin can be seen. York Place, (below), runs from Trafalgar Street to Cheapside and forms the commencement of the London Road shopping area. It fronts St. Peter's Church. A steam wagon can be seen approaching.





London Road, (view north from south end) C. 1911 (1983, below).

Many shop names of tram days have gone from the London Road scene, Pococks, (Drapers), Giggins, (Bakers), Maypole, (Grocers), Sanders Bros., (Grocers), to name a few. Others have moved to larger premises, Woolworths to Roslings, (General Draper), old site and Sainsburys to Woolworths old location. Boots have crossed the road to the corner of Oxford Street and Marks and Spencer have also relocated their premises in the period. In 1911 trams had the freedom of the road!

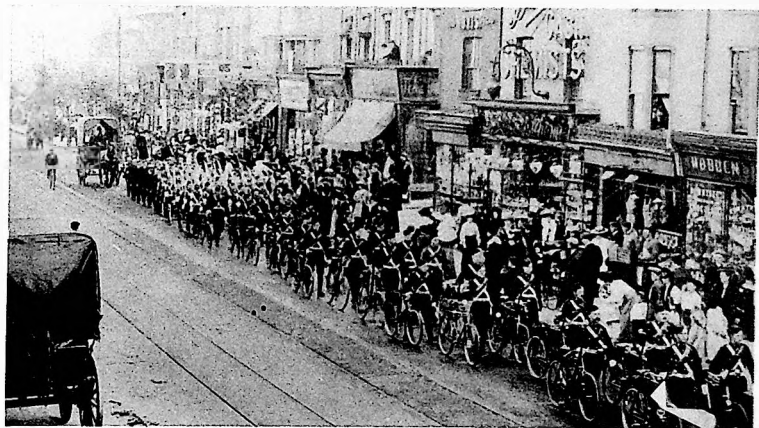




London Road, north from York Hill. C. 1908.
 London Road, south from York Hill. C. 1912 (below)

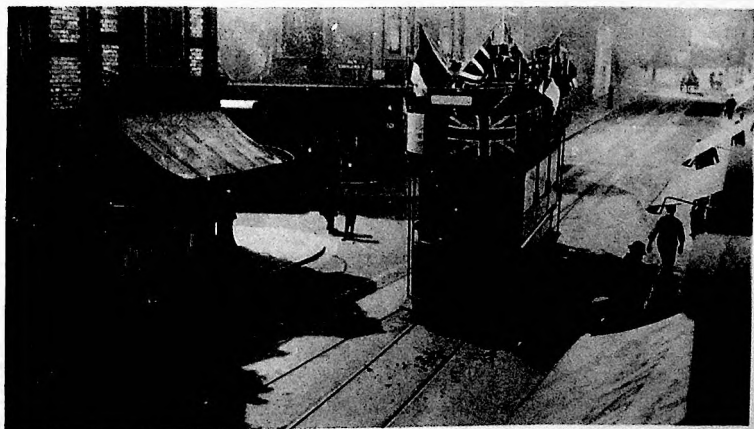
Until about 1900 London Road maintained a residential character and it can be said that the coming of the trams, about 1903, was an important factor in its development as a shopping centre. The removal of garden areas enabled a wide road with broad pavements to be created. The trams that served London Road enabled shoppers from the Seven Dials, Dyke Road, Beaconsfield Road, Preston Drove and Ditchling Road areas to speedily reach the shops.





**London Road, south from Anne Street. C. 1908.
New England Road, (view west). 16th April 1910. (below)**

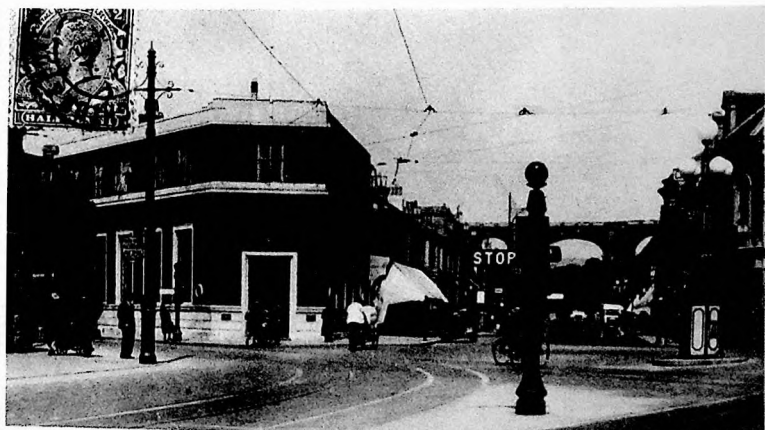
A mobile column of the 1st V.B. Royal Sussex Regiment marching up London Road. The cycles were ideal in many ways but not for rough country! Boots occupied No.19 for many more years before crossing the road to the Oxford Street corner. (below) In the years before the Great War, French visitors were often entertained with a tram ride round the town. A party of French footballers can be seen enjoying the April sunshine in 1910, as the tram passes New England Street.





Preston Circus, (view north). C. 1919 and C. 1932 (below).

In the days of the trams, Preston Circus was the central hub of the system. Lines went north, south, east and west. The lower view illustrates the semaphore traffic control system introduced by Brighton Police in the late 1920's. The 'Stop' arms were controlled by a constable, from the central 'pulpit', seen on the right. It was ideal for stopping all traffic when the Fire Brigade wished to answer a call (The Station is out of view, to the right).





Preston Circus, (view north). 29th December 1908.
Beaconsfield Road, north from Clyde Road. C. 1907 (below)

On 29th December 1908 Brighton was struck by a snow-storm. The photographer has caught the mood of the day with more spectators than sweepers clearing the snow! Generally trams were not held up by ice and snow, but which can still throw modern transport into chaos. (below) From the Circus the lines ran, straight and true, (3'6" gauge), up Beaconsfield Road, (Route 'B'). This route was clockwise, returning down Ditchling Road to the Aquarium terminus. The road is now one-way, southbound.





Stanford Avenue, (view east) C. 1910.
The Seven Dials, (view east) C. 1907 (below).

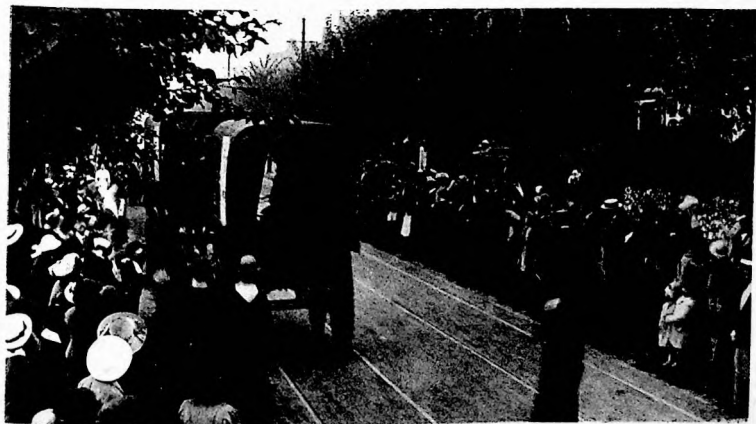
Stanford Avenue proceeds to Five Ways, where it once met tram lines, again. The lines from Preston Circus, up Beaconsfield Road, crossed here. Today Stanford Avenue, up to the junction, is one way for the southbound Preston Road traffic. The Seven Dials, (below), is at the summit of Chatham Place and trams from the Circus turned right, at this point, into Dyke Road. The view is from Vernon Terrace. The other four roads, meeting at the Dials, are Buckingham Place, Dyke Road (south), Goldsmid Road and Prestonville Road.





The Seven Dials, (view south) C. 1907.
Dyke Road, north of Old Shoreham Road. C. 1914 (below)

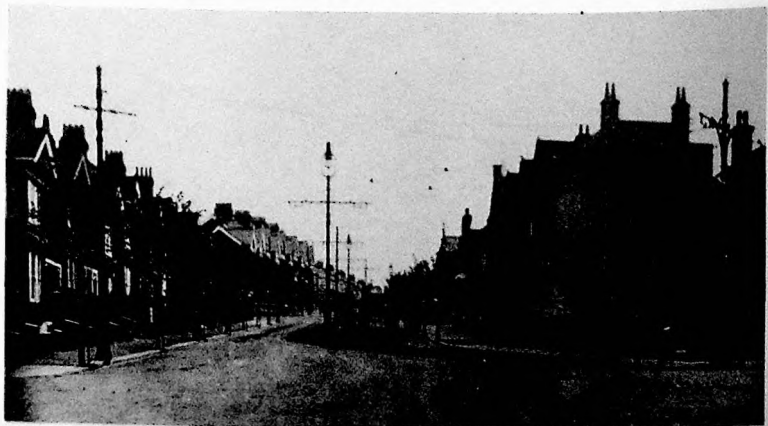
The Seven Dials area developed 1850-1870 with the building of many large houses in such roads as Vernon Terrace and Montpelier Crescent. The tower of Clifton Road Congregational Church can be seen, to the south, up Dyke Road, (see page 13). (below) The new buildings, (left of view), of the Brighton, Hove and Sussex Grammar School were speedily requisitioned for use as the 2nd Eastern Command General Hospital in the 1914-1918 war. Crowds are watching the poignant scene of wounded arriving from the Marne fighting.





Beaconsfield Villas, (view north) C. 1907.
Preston Drove, (view east) C. 1906 (below)

Beaconsfield Road becomes Villas after crossing Stanford Avenue. In tram days the clockwise 'Beaconsfield' route continued to join Preston Drove, as shown in the lower photo. Trams in the reverse direction had journeyed up the Ditchling Road and were on Route 'D'. When the lines were laid most houses to the north of Preston Drove were in reasonable walking distance of the trams. The tram shelter at the top of the Villas. (page 28), stood to the right of the lower picture.





Preston Drive, (view east) C. 1913.

Ditchling Road, Five Ways junction, (view south) 1910 (below)

The houses in Preston Drive, at this point, look over the Blaker Recreation Ground. This four acre park was presented to the town by Sir John George Blaker, (Mayor in 1895-98), in 1893. It was laid out by the Corporation at a cost of £2,000 and opened in November, 1894. The, lower, view of Ditchling Road includes the French, semi-rigid, Lebaudy type airship passing over Brighton on 26th October, 1910. The airship, designed by Paul and Pierre Lebaudy was not a success.





Richmond Place, (view south) C. 1912.
 Waterloo Place, (view south) C. 1921 (below)

Richmond Place and Waterloo Place are to the east of St. Peter's Church and lead to Richmond Terrace and Lewes Road. The tram depot was in Coombe Terrace, (near Bear Road), it is the Brighton Borough Transport Bus Depot, today. The Elm Grove, (Route 'E'), Queens Park Road, (Route 'Q'), and Lewes Road, (Route 'L'), went this way. The Queens Park Road junction with Elm Grove necessitated trams, on the route to Rock Gardens, to reverse into Queens Park Road. (Reversing the procedure on return).





Lewes Road, (view north) C. 1911.
Lewes Road, (view south) C. 1913 (below)

St. Martin's Church, on the left, is a large edifice in red brick, with stone dressings, in the Early English style. It was erected to memorialise the Rev. H.M. Wagner, Vicar of Brighton for more than forty years. Erection started in 1874 and occupied many years. In the lower view, the road to the right is Caledonian Road. The mature trees on the eastern side of Lewes Road are another memory of the past.





Queens Park Road, (view north). C. 1912.
(view north west). C. 1927 (below)

Up to 1927 only one tram route traversed Queens Park Road. That was indicated as Route 'Q' on the side indicator. It ran from the Aquarium terminus via Marlborough Place, Richmond Place, Elm Grove, Queens Park Road and Egremont Place to Rock Gardens. Consequently the route ended near Marine Parade and not a great distance from the starting point. However, it was a very useful route for those who lived in the hilly area served by the various stops on the way. (continued on page 27)





Egremont Place, (view north) C. 1926.
Lower Rock Gardens, (view south) (below) C. 1909

(continuation from page 26)

From 1st January, 1927, a new Cross Country Route, Route 'C', was introduced which used the same route from the bottom of Elm Grove having come from the Seven Dials via New England Road, Viaduct Road and Union Road. In the view of Egremont Place the Egremont Gate to Queen's Park can be seen. (below) From the terminus, at Lower Rock Gardens, a seafront shelter can be observed. The stop, which included a Tram Shelter, was well situated for both sea and shops.





**Tram Shelters. Preston Drove/Beaconsfield Villas. C. 1930.
Ditchling Road. 1983. (below)**

The Tramway Route Map of July, 1915, indicated that sixteen shelters were located at various points on the 9½ miles of the tramway system. They were of a 'rustic' external appearance with seating and doors. At least two shelters, of a more modern construction, were added subsequently. Many of the shelters stood in the road and in later years they became traffic hazards. In 1986 three 'rustic' shelters remain, one was at Tivoli Crescent (North). It is now resited further down Dyke Road for the 'hazard' reason previously mentioned. (continued on page 29)





**A Tram Shelter, Near St. Peter's Church.
En Route to the Chalk Pits Museum. 1981 (below)**

(continuation from page 28)

Another shelter still stands in Ditchling Road, (Hollingdean Road junction), and another remains at the 'Pepper Box' in Queens Park Road. There is also a 'second generation' shelter in Dyke Road, opposite Port Hall Road. A similar shelter once stood on the east side of St. Peter's Church, this was removed on 5th December, 1981, between 8 and 9am, and it now does duty as a station on the small railway at the Chalk Pits Museum, Amberley, Sussex





Western Road, (view west from Crown Street) C. 1905.
North Street, Soper's Corner. (view west) C. 1930 (below)

Western Road was a narrow street in 1905 and the entrance from North Street, Soper's Corner, (below), was made round an equally narrow corner. In 1925 Brighton Corporation embarked on an ambitious widening scheme, on the north side, which was not completed until 1937. The former premises of the Bon Marche drapery store, at the western corner of Spring Street, were used as temporary accommodation for Stafford's Bargain House, (estab. 1860), Boots, and others, whilst their premises were set back and rebuilt. (continued on page 31)



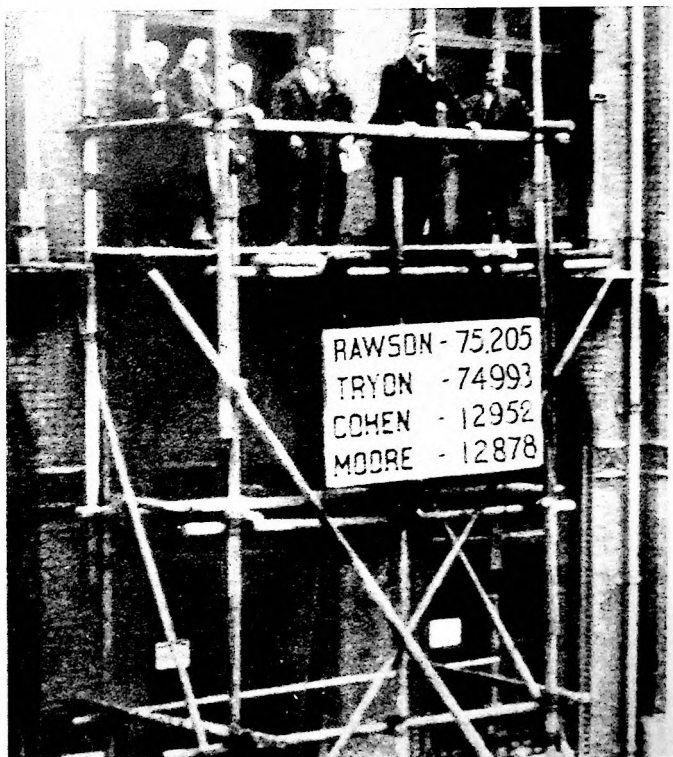


Western Road. King George V's Silver Jubilee. 1935.

(continuation from page 30)

By 1935 the widening had proceeded to the arcade area and the bottleneck to North Street still remained. The rebuilt premises of Stafford's are now the Seeboard shop. Boots handsome store, (opened 29th November, 1928), has been vacated more recently and is now divided into three shop premises. Excellent decorations were provided for the Jubilee and these are well viewed, east from Spring Street, (upper photo), and east from Marlborough Street. (below)





Outside the Corn Exchange, Church Street. 1931.

The Declaration of the result of the poll in the General Election, 1931. Sir Cooper Rawson and the Rt. Hon. G.C. Tryon, who were re-elected, had been Conservative Members of Parliament for the Brighton Constituency since 1922 and 1910, respectively. By today's sophisticated television reporting of results, including the use of computers, it is, indeed, as old fashioned as the trams! However, little has changed in the counting of the votes and the build up to the results.

